

## INFORMATION SHEET

ORDER \_\_\_\_\_  
WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS  
LIBERTY COMPOSTING, INC.  
FOR OPERATION  
LIBERTY COMPOSTING FACILITY  
KERN COUNTY

Liberty Composting, Inc. (Discharger), formerly known as San Joaquin Composting, Inc., owns and operates a 162-acre municipal biosolids composting facility located in northwestern Kern County about 9 miles northwest of Lost Hills on Holloway Road. 128 acres are used for composting operations and 34 acres are used for finished product staging and holding. The finished product qualifies as Exceptional Quality Biosolids and is mostly used as a soil amendment on 20,000 acres of farmland in Kings County owned and operated by McCarthy Family Farms, Inc. Liberty Composting, Inc. is also owned by McCarthy Family Farms, Inc.

On 6 September 2002, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region, (Central Valley Water Board) adopted Order R5-2002-0172, in which the facility was classified as Class II facility suitable for storage and treatment of nonhazardous solid wastes or designated waste as a waste pile in accordance with Title 27 CCR Section 20220(a). This order is being revised to allow the Discharger to compost liquid biosolids and liquid food processing byproducts, and to reflect a reorganization and name change from San Joaquin Composting, Inc., to Liberty Composting, Inc.

The Discharger composts municipal biosolids with bulking agents using the turned windrow method. The biosolids originate from wastewater treatment plants regulated by orders adopted by various regional water boards and are transported to the facility by truck. The bulking agents consist of yard residue (grass clippings, leaves, etc.) and food processing byproducts. The permitted maximum annual receipt of all combined composting feedstocks is 786,000 tons. Depending on the end use of the product, the portion of bulking agents used in the composting process will be up to 50%. The wastes treated at the facility are classified as non-hazardous solid waste. Liquid residual wastes (such as leachate and precipitation that comes into contact with composting material) are collected in composite-lined impoundments and allowed to evaporate.

Biosolids used for composting are tested by the generator prior to shipment to the composting facility. Only biosolids that meet the requirements for non-hazardous biosolids specified in Title 22 CCR, Division 4, Chapter 11, Article 3, California Code of Regulations (CCR), and complies with 40 CFR 503 for exceptional quality compost, are accepted for composting.

The facility is on the floor of the Antelope Plain in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The designated beneficial uses of the intermittent streams (which flow east into the Tulare Lake Basin), as specified in the Tulare Lake Basin Plan (Basin Plan), are

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agricultural supply; industrial service and process supply; water contact and non-contact water recreation; warm fresh water habitat; preservation of rare, threatened, and endangered species; and groundwater recharge.

First encountered groundwater occurs beneath the facility in an unconfined aquifer about 90 feet below grade (about 335 feet above mean sea level). The groundwater has an electrical conductivity that ranges from 4,200 to 8,900 micromhos per centimeter and a total dissolved solids concentration that ranges from 3,660 to 8,850 milligrams per liter. The facility is in the Kern County Basin Hydrologic Unit, Detailed Analysis Unit (DAU) 259. The designated beneficial uses of the groundwater include municipal and domestic water supply and agricultural supply. The quality of the first encountered groundwater is not suitable for these designated beneficial uses.

The groundwater is protected from degradation by site-specific characteristics including a substantial thickness of low-hydraulic-conductivity soils, low precipitation, depth to groundwater, and stormwater runoff collection and recycling. No impact to groundwater by inorganic or organic waste constituents has been indicated by the existing groundwater monitoring program.

The measured hydraulic conductivity of the native soils beneath the composting subunits ranges from  $1.1 \times 10^{-4}$  to  $7.2 \times 10^{-6}$  centimeters per second (cm/sec) at depths less than three feet and, at 20 feet below ground surface is  $2 \times 10^{-6}$  cm/sec.

The top one foot of the storage and treatment areas are compacted to 90 percent dry density to obtain a uniform hydraulic conductivity of  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  cm/sec, and graded to within one-tenth of one foot of grade to obtain a uniform working surface to inhibit vertical migration of wastes.

Based on the site specific characteristics, the threat to the beneficial uses of surface water and groundwater posed by the composting operation is not commensurate with the stringent monitoring, siting, construction, and design standards applicable to a Class II waste pile, under the Title 27 regulations, so long as it meets, and continues to meet, the requirements of this Order. Section 20200(a)(1) of Title 27 CCR allows the Central Valley Water Board to make a finding that "... a particular waste constituent or combination of constituents presents a lower risk of water quality degradation than indicated by classification according to this article." The Title 27 regulations do not provide for a waste pile of lower classification than Class II. However, based on a review of the Discharger's Report of Waste Discharge and on the lower risk to water quality cited in this Order, the Central Valley Water Board finds, pursuant to Title 27 CCR Section 20200(a)(1), that the operation is not subject to the Class II waste pile

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liner requirements contained in the Title 27 regulations so long as the operation continues to meet the requirements of this Order.

The WDRs require total containment of wastes and do not permit degradation of surface water or groundwater. Further antidegradation analysis is therefore not needed. The permitted discharge is consistent with the antidegradation provisions of California State Water Resources Control Board Resolution 68-16.

The Kern County Planning Department, as lead agency, has determined that the mitigated negative declaration approved on 24 April 1995 is adequate and that the changes proposed by the Discharger are not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Central Valley Water Board staff reviewed the mitigated negative declaration and found it to be adequate for the changes proposed by the Discharger for the following reasons:

- Although new compost feedstocks are being added, the nature of the waste should not change,
- The volume of waste is not changing, and
- The changes proposed for the waste treatment process do not change the threat to water quality.

REH: 12/9/2008